

Veteran Federal Public Defenders Reappointed

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OCE Public Information Office

Chief Judge Mary M. Schroeder of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has announced the reappointments of two veteran federal public defenders.

Thomas Hillier II was reappointed to a seventh term as federal public defender for the Western District of Washington. Mr. Hillier was first appointed to the position in March 1982 and reappointed in 1986, 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002. His seventh term begins March 3, 2006.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the Western District of Washington has offices in Seattle and Tacoma. It opened 1,767 new cases in fiscal year 2004, up nearly 3 percent from the prior fiscal year.

Franny A. Forsman was reappointed to her fifth term as federal public defender for the District of Nevada. Ms. Forsman was first appointed to the position in December 1989 and reappointed in 1994, 1998 and 2002. Her new term is effective March 2, 2006.

The Office of the Federal Public Defender for the District of Nevada is located in Las Vegas with a small satellite office in Reno. It opened 1,261 new cases in fiscal year 2004, unchanged from the prior fiscal year.

Mr. Hillier earned his undergraduate degree in economics from St. Martin's College in Olympia, Wash., in 1969. He received his J.D. from Gonzaga University Law School in Spokane, Wash., in 1973, when he also began his law career as an assistant public defender for the Spokane County Public Defender's Office. In 1975, he was hired as the assistant federal public defender for the Western District of Washington.

Ms. Forsman graduated from the University of Nevada in 1968 with a degree in social work. After working as a social worker, she earned her J.D. in 1977 from the University of Notre Dame Law School.

Ms. Forsman practiced privately in Indiana until 1981. She returned to Nevada to work for the state Supreme Court as deputy supervising staff attorney, then resumed private practice in 1984. She served as head attorney for the special litigation unit of Beckley, Singleton, De Lanoy, Jemison & List in Las Vegas until accepting appointment as the federal public defender for Nevada.

Judges of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit appoint the federal public defenders who serve within the circuit. The court makes its initial appointment after a nationwide recruitment and the use of a local screening committee pursuant to EEO guidelines. A defender may be reappointed if the court concludes that he/she is performing in a highly satisfactory manner based upon a broad survey and performance evaluation process.

Congress created the Office of the Federal Public Defender to fulfill the constitutional requirement that indigents charged with federal crimes be provided with professional legal representation at no cost. Congress funds the Offices of the Federal Public Defender through the Defender Services Division of the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. By statute, the judges of the courts of appeal select and appoint the federal public defender for a renewable term of four years.